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ABSTRACT

The paper briefly describes TIP (Telecommunications Intervention Program), a service which delivers preliminary Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for Head Start handicapped children based on a computerized data base of long range goals, short term objectives, and specific related learning activities. This high technology expert system was developed by experts in the areas of early childhood, psychology, speech pathology, and special education. IEPs are provided for ten handicapping conditions (blind, deaf, emotional disturbance, health impaired, hearing impaired, learning disabled, mental retardation, orthopedic impairment, speech/language deficits, and visual impairments) as well as the gifted condition. Users of the system screen the child using standard instruments and submit data concerning chronological age, suspected handicapping condition, and developmental age/s. Data may be communicated by a telephone conference, mail, or direct computer link. Users receive a printout of goals and objectives accompanied by referenced curriculum, materials, and recommended activities. The rapid return of IEPs allows a child to receive and master several plans in a year. During the second and third years of operation over 5000 IEPs were implemented and over 800 hot line calls were made for purposes of crisis intervention, short term counseling, and other information services. The program serves Head Start Programs in the states of Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. (DB)

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Serving 2,500 Preschoolers Mechanically Should We Be Serving You

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Serving 2,500 Preschoolers Mechanically, Should We Be Serving You

In essence, every preschool handicapped child requires an Individual Educational Plan (IEP). Unfortunately, a very meaningful concern exists due to a delay in designing and implementing a written IEP. In many cases, the child's diagnosis is delayed because the appropriate professionals (e.g., educational diagnostician, psychologist, speech pathologist and others) may not be able to actually diagnose and evaluate the child until later in the program year. This difficulty is mainly due to scheduling appointments and the apparent lack of qualified psychologists and other professionals to serve as members of the diagnostic team. Due to these significant delays and concerns in the construction of IEPs, appropriate individualized planning, teaching strategies and successful placement of the handicapped child are difficult and quite challenging.

In order to remedy these deficiencies and concerns, the TIP (Telecommunications Intervention Program) was designed to deliver a special preliminary IEP by means of a high technology, expert system which was developed

by 26 experts in the professional areas of early childhood, psychology, speech pathology and special education. TIP covers ten handicapping conditions: Blind, Deaf, Emotional Disturbance, Health Impaired, Hearing Impaired, Learning Disabled, Mental Retardation, Orthopedic Impairment, Speech/Language Deficits and Visual Impairments. The Gifted condition is addressed as well. Naturally, the latest available research was used for input. IEPs are developed for all 11 conditions matching the functioning developmental age years and chronological age years expectancies. Also, suggested long range goals and short term objectives are established with specific activities to carry out the goals attached. This massive data base is stored in an IBM xt computer with a 60 megabyte hard disk at Texas Tech University.

Materials helpful in presenting the activities are included for comprehensive program development. The teaching materials suggested are derived from reliable early childhood curriculums. Each of the items is housed at Texas Tech University Materials Lending Library and may be accessed for use in review and teaching.

The TIP is a robust resource for preschool children, their families and staff. It consists of a variety of professional and special services (e.g., crisis intervention and prevention, short term counseling, referrals, consultation, information, resource bank and preliminary IEPs). The outstanding features of these services are confidential, resourceful and supportive. TIP applies the principles and skills of counseling, early childhood development, special education and psychology with the highest level of professional competence, dedication and responsibility in an expedient and facilitatory fashion.

How does the TIP system work? First of all, there are three options that may be used by a center, school, or staff member. Of course, one, two, or combination of all three of the available options may be utilized. Any of them will work well to save teachers and other staff precious time.

The user of this program simply screens the children utilizing any of the acceptable instruments

(e.g., SUCCESS, LAP, BRIGANCE, DENVER, etc.). A few facts must be known about each child.

1. Chronological age
2. Suspected handicapping condition
3. Developmental age(s) or data based on your screening instrument

This data can be submitted to the Institute for Child and Family Studies, Texas Tech University, for entry in one of the following ways:

Option One:

Telephone Conference

Call the toll free HOT LINE number (1-800-527-2802) and submit data by phone while computer operator gives verbal feedback to the caller (dependent on computer load), and/or places printout in the daily mail.

Option Two:

Mailout

Fill out a special form for each child and mail information to the Institute for Child and Family Studies. Data will be processed and returned via mail to the respective user in the near future.

Option Three:

Computer Link

A computer is used as a terminal for the local program. Via modem hookup, the user calls the HOT LINE number accessing by return printout locally. The Institute for Child and Family Studies will train personnel desiring computer training.

What the user receives is a printout of goals and objectives based on child development theory that spirals upward in three-month intervals from birth to age seven years. These goals and objectives are accompanied by referenced curriculum, materials and specific activities.

The printout can be carried to the IEP meeting as a base plan for forming the IEP; it also acts as a longitudinal planning base when reviewing and updating the IEP.

For the mainstreaming, classroom teacher, this high tech program is a massive, quickly obtainable resource for planning and teaching.

This specialized program's major focus is the rapid return of IEPs, wherein a child can receive as many plans as he or she can master in a year. The solution to accomplishment is screening, receiving the IEP, working it to proficiency expectance and going back to the program for an upgraded, more advanced level. It is truly sad to see a child receive only one IEP for the entire year! In the model handicap programs, children sometimes work several plans each year.

Furthermore, an educational diagnostician, an early childhood specialist, a special resource handicap coordinator and staff psychologist are available for consultation and discussion concerning each child via

the HOT LINE number (1-800-527-2802) as well as crisis intervention, information and short term counseling for parents and staff.

This high tech program is an excellent TIP in serving preschool handicapped and mainstream children and assisting families, parents, teachers and other staff who are involved in early childhood educational programs.

The inception of this high tech program began in October of 1985 with 12 Head Start sites in Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. During this pilot year (1985-86), 400 preliminary individual education plans were completed via direct access to the computer TIP system. Training was provided for the 12 pilot grantees as well as follow-up support and technical assistance.

In addition to obtaining IEPs via direct link, the telephone conference/consultation and mail out options were made available to all Head Start centers in Region VI (Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico) during the second year of operation (1986-87). Due to these two options, the TIP became extremely

popular and certainly expanded the quality and quantity of services, obviously, this high tech program offered greater diversity and eligibility for a more intensive utilization of TIP. The data for the second year of actual implementation were 2, 556 preliminary IEPs and at least 586 hot line calls were made for the purposes of crisis intervention, short term counseling and other information services.

In the third year of operation (1987-88), the TIP continued to grow and expand: 2, 786 preliminary IEPs were completed, and 254 additional hot line calls were made with regard to behavior management, counseling, crisis intervention and information services.

In a nut shell, the TIP Network has clearly proven to be a powerful resource, very worthwhile and a real success for Head Start programs in Region VI.